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THE SOLDIER'S TEAR.

[A story by Miss Watson.]

Upon the hill he turned,
To take a last fond look
Of the valley and the village church,
And the cottage by the brook.
He listened to the sounds
So familiar to his ear,
And the soldier leant upon his sword,
And wip'd away a tear.

Beside that cottage porch
A girl was on her knees;
She held aloft a snowy scarf,
Which fluttered in the breeze;
She breath'd a prayer for him,
A prayer he could not hear,
But he paused to bless her as she knelt,
And wip'd away a tear.

He turned and left the spot,
Oh! do not deem him weak;
For dauntless was the Soldier's heart,
Though tears were on his cheek.
Go watch the foremost ranks,
In danger's dark career;
Be sure the hand most daring there,
Has wip'd away a tear.

[From the New-York Mirror.]

BURNING SHIP AND SIGNAL GUNS. A TALE OF THE SEA.

I remember an occurrence connected with one of the voyages which I made across the Atlantic, which exhibited, by fearful example, how potent an ally the imagination may become to the conscience in its persecution of the guilty.

Late in the autumn of 18—, I happened to be in the southern part of the United States, when some affairs of importance required my speedy appearance in Italy. The delay which would have occurred by coming to New York to embark and the inconvenience of travelling by land at that season, induced me to engage a passage at once in a vessel which was about to sail from Charleston, laden with cotton for Marseilles. The ship was commanded by Capt. S., who was also the owner of the cargo.

Without any note worthy occurrence we had arrived within a few days sail of the coast of Spain, when we spoke a ship which had just come from Marseilles; the vessels exchanged the latest papers of their respective countries, and went on again in their several courses. When the French gazettes were opened within our ship, our captain read with unexpected delight that so small was the supply of cotton in the market, and so strong the demand for it, that the next vessel which arrived with a freight of it, might command almost any price which the avarice of the owner should dictate.

The wind, which had been for some days setting a little towards the south, was at this time getting round to the east, and promised to bring us without delay, directly to the Mediterranean. The captain perceived that, by availing himself to the utmost of this freshening breeze, he might, pretty certainly, realize a splendid fortune; a consideration which, as he had for years struggled with little success in the pursuit of wealth, filled him with the most enthusiastic joy. Every sail was expanded to the wind, and we advanced with the greatest rapidity.

On the following morning a light was descried to the west, apparently directly in the course which we were making; as we proceeded briskly, however, it fell considerably to the south of us, and we perceived that it was a ship on fire. The light increased every moment, and the signal guns fell upon our ear with distressing rapidity. The captain was at this time pacing the deck, as he had done almost constantly since the intelligence had reached him from the passing vessel; for the restlessness of expectation scarcely allowed him to repose a moment. His eye was directed resolutely toward the north; and though the light now glared unshunnable, and the frequent shots could not be unheard, and the commotion and exclamations of the passengers could not be unnoticed, his glance never fell upon the object which engrossed all others.

After a few moments of intense wonder and excitement among the passengers and crew at the silence of the captain, the steersman called to him and asked if he should not turn out to the distressed vessel; but the other rudely ordered him to attend to his own concerns. A little while after, at the solicitation of the whole company on board, I went up to the captain and said to him that I deemed it my duty to inform him that the universal desire of his crew was that relief should be given to the burning ship. He replied with indignation that the vessel could not be saved, and that he should only lose the wind; and immediately went down to the cabin and locked the door. He was a kind-hearted man by nature, and on ordinary occasions few would have taken greater trouble to benefit a fellow-being. But the prospect of riches was too much for his virtue; the hope of great gain de-
voured all the better feelings of his nature, and made his heart as hard as stone.

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If his mother had shrieked from the flames, I do not believe that he would have turned from his course.

The crew, in this condition of things, had nothing to do but to lament the master's cruelty, and submit to it. They watched the fiery mass conscious that a large company of their brethren was perishing within their sight, who, by their efforts, might probably be saved. It was not for several hours that the captain appeared again upon the deck, and from his appearance then, I imagine that the conflict during his solitude must have been severe and trying. I stood near him as he came up. His face had a rigid yet anxious look; the countenance of a man who braved, yet feared some shock. His back was turned to the quarter from which we came, and in that position he addressed to me calmly some indifferent observations. While the conversation went on, he cast frequent and hurried glances to the south and east till his eyes had swept the whole horizon, and he had satisfied himself that the ship was no longer in view; he then turned fully round, and with an affected gaiety, but a real uneasiness which was apparent in the random character of his remarks, drew out his glass, and having, by a long and scrutinizing examination satisfied his fears, at length recovered his composure.

When we reached our destination, I found a ship preparing to sail for Florence, and I took my passage, leaving the captain to dispose of his cargo at his pleasure. About eight months after this, when I had almost forgotten the occurrence, I was sitting in the private parlor of a London Hotel, when a letter was put into my hands from Captain S. It stated that the writer who was in the city, had heard of my arrival, and would esteem it a very great kindness if I would visit him at my earliest leisure; my coming would be of the utmost importance to himself and others; his servant, it added, waited to show me the way. I immediately set out to comply with the request.

Upon entering the room, I was shocked at the change which had taken place in his appearance. He was thin, pale and haggard, with a wildness of eye that almost indicated that his reason was unsettled. He testified much joy at seeing me, and desiring me to be seated, began his communication.

'I have taken the liberty,' said he 'of desiring your company at this time, because you are the only person in London to whom I can venture to make application; and I am going to lay upon a commission, to which I am sure you will not object. The circumstances of your voyage to Marseilles will occur to your mind without my repeating them. I sold my cargo upon the most advantageous terms; and was rendered at once a rich man. The possession of wealth was new to me, and its enjoyment added, in my case, to its usual gratification, the charm of novelty. In the capital of Paris I spent many weeks of the highest pleasure, until one day on entering a cafe I took up a gazette, and my eyes fell upon an account of an awful burning of H. B. M. ship. The announcement fell upon me like the bolt of heaven. My heart beat and my frame shivered; but I read every word of the article. The vessel which I passed the day before had seen the light from a great distance and immediately put back to render assistance, but arrived too late to rescue more than two of the crew. The reported that a vessel passed to the north of them within half an hour's sail, but paid no regard to the repeated signals; upon the commander of that ship, the article concluded, must rest the loss of two hundred persons.

'My peace of mind was gone forever. My ingenuity could devise no sophistry which suggested comfort. Wherever I went that day, I was haunted by remorse. I retired to bed that I might forget in sleep the tortures of the day; but a terrific dream brought before my mind the whole scene of the conflagration, with the roar of the signal guns. I awoke with horror. Thrice on the same night did I compose myself to sleep and thrice was I awakened by the repetition of the dream. For many hours on the succeeding day my spirits were shockingly depressed, but the gay company which I frequented gradually restored me to serenity, and by night I was tolerably composed. But the evening again brought terror; the same vision rushed upon my mind and racked it to agony, whenever I fell into a slumber. Perceiving that if I yielded to this band of tormentors I should quickly be maddened by suffering. I resolved to struggle with remorse, and to harden my heart against conscience. I succeeded always, when awake, in mastering my emotion, but no power on earth could shield me from the torment of sleep. Imagining at length that the prostrate position of my bed might be one cause of the vividness of my dreams, I took the resolution of sleeping upright in a chair, while my servant watched by me.

But no sooner did my head drop upon my breast in incipient slumber, then the fire again tortured my brain; the signal guns again rang upon my inward ear. I sought all diversions, I wandered over Europe, seeking to relieve myself from the dominion of this fantasy by perpetual change of sights and succession of sounds, but in vain. Daily the horrid picture more and more enslaved my imagination, until at length even in walking, while my eye rested on vacancy, a burning ship was painted in the air, and with my waking ears I heard the eternal guns. The horror has absorbed my being. I am separated by a circle of fire from world; I breathe the stifling air of hell. Even now, I see nothing but the wide sea, and the incessant flame upon it; I hear now the agonizing signals, boom! boom!

The unfortunate man paused for a moment, and upon a human face I never saw yet such anguish. He resumed, in a few minutes, his account.

'This must soon end. The purpose for which I have sent for you is briefly told. The whole sum of money which I gained by my ship's cargo is in the band of England. I shall order in my will that every cent of it shall obey your disposal. I wish you to discover the families of those who perished in this vessel; you will learn their names by inquiring at the admiralty. Distribute to them every cent of this money.—You will not deny this last request of a dying man; promise me that you will faithfully perform my wish.'

I gave him the promise which he desired and left.

That night Captain S. took poison.

A THRILLING NARRATIVE.

The following affecting narrative of a visit to the barn at Hempstead Beach, where were collected the dead of the barque Mexico, is from a letter published in the Boston Mercantile Journal:—

On reaching Hempstead, I concluded to go somewhat off the road to look at the place where the barque Mexico was cast away. In half an hour we came to Loo's tavern; some 4 or 5 miles this side of the beach where the ship lay—and here, in his barn, had been deposited the bodies of the ill-fated passengers which had been thrown upon the shore. I went out to the barn. The doors were open, and such a scene as presented itself to my view, I certainly never could have contemplated. It was a dreadful, a frightful scene of horror.

Forty or fifty bodies, of all ages and sexes, were lying promiscuously before me, over the floor, all frozen as solid as marble—and all, except a few, in the very dresses in which they perished. Some with their hands clenched, as if for warmth, and almost every one with an arm crooked and bent as it would be in clinging to the rigging.

There were scattered about among the number, four or five beautiful little girls, from six to sixteen years of age, their cheeks and lips as red as roses, with their calm blue eyes open, looking you in the face as if they would speak. I could hardly realize they were dead. I touched their cheeks, and they were frozen as hard and as solid as a rock, and not the least indentation could be made by any pressure of the hand. I could perceive a resemblance to each other, and another little fellow had been crying, and thus frozen, with the muscles of the face just as we see children when crying. There was a brother and sister thrown on the beach, locked in each other's arms; but they had been separated in the barn. All the men had their lips firmly compressed together, and with the most agonizing expression on their countenances I ever beheld.

A little girl had raised herself on tip-toe, and thus was frozen in that position, supposed them to be the daughters of a passenger named Pepper, who perished, together with his wife and family.

On the arm of some were to be seen the impression of a rope, which they had clung—the mark of the twist deeply sunk into the flesh. I saw one poor negro sailor, a tall man, with his head thrown back, his lips parted, and his now sightless eye balls turned upward, and his arms crossed over his breast, as if imploring Heaven for aid. This poor fellow evidently had frozen while in the act of prayer.

One female had a rope tied to her leg, which had bound her to the rigging—and it was an awful sight; and such a picture of horror was before me, that I became unconsciously fixed to the spot, and found myself trying to suppress my ordinary breathing, lest I should disturb the repose of those around me. I was aroused from the reverie by the entrance of a man—a coroner.

As I was about to leave, my attention became directed to a girl, who, I afterwards learned, had come from that country from the city, to search for her sister. She had sent for her to come over from England, and had received intelligence that she was in this ship. She came in to the barn, and the second body she cast

her eyes upon was hers. She gave way to such a burst of impassioned grief and anguish, that I could not behold her without sharing her feelings. She threw herself upon the cold and icy face and neck of the lifeless body, and thus with her arms around her, remained wailing, moaning, and sobbing, till I came away, and when some distance off, I could hear her calling her by name in the most frantic manner.

So little time had they to prepare for their fate, that I perceived a bunch of keys and a half eaten cake fall from the bosom of a girl whom the coroner was removing. The cake appeared as if a part of it had just been bitten and hastily thrust into her bosom; and round her neck was a ribbon with a pair of scissors suspended.

And to observe the stout, rugged sailors, too, whose iron frames could endure so much hardship—here they lay, masses of ice. Such scenes show us indeed how powerless and feeble are all human efforts, when contending with the storms, and tempest which sweep with resistless violence over the face of the deep. And yet the vessel was so near the shore that the shrieks and moans of the poor creatures were heard through that bitter, dreadful night, till towards morning the groans died away, and all was hushed in death, and the murmur of the raging billows was all the sound that met the ear.

POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS.

There are few persons who will acknowledge that they are superstitious; but there are still less, who are not, in some degree, under the influence of superstitious fears. There is almost a universal apprehension of something supernatural. Those who laugh the loudest at ghosts, and hobgoblins, will still quicken their pace, as they hear some unusual sound when passing the graveyard at the gloomy hour of midnight. The calm and intellectual philosopher, whose reason spurns all imaginary evils, is compelled at times to be ashamed of himself, and he finds that imagination has the mastery over judgment. The reason of the universal prevalence of these feelings, is to be found in a great degree, in the impressions we receive in childhood. The talks of the nursery awaken a belief, which the future judgment may pronounce to be foolish, but the influence of which, in a greater or less degree, is felt through life. There is undoubtedly much in the peculiarity of our present condition, to give the mind a strong tendency to apprehend supernatural events. The mysterious union of soul to body—the awful phenomenon of death—the departure of friends we love, from present scenes, and their entrance upon a condition we know not what, and into worlds we know not where—the certain knowledge of spiritual existences unseen and unheard, all prepare the mind to be easily excited by occurrences, apparently conflicting with acknowledged laws. But it is generally in childhood that we receive those impressions, which future years are unable to erase.

And last, any, from the selection of this subject, should anticipate a *mirth making* performance, we forwarn our readers that it will not be our endeavor to amuse with witty speculations, but to interest with facts.

It is a fact, humiliating though it may be, that there is hardly an individual in any land who does not at times experience momentary inconveniences from such feelings. And there are great multitudes who have an undoubting confidence in the reality of ghostly interference in mortal concerns.

Those who are not habituated to reflection, often retain undiminished till a dying hour, a belief in those signs and omens which they were taught in childhood.—They do not question the truth of those ideas, which have been instilled into the mind in early infancy, and which have been the motives to which parents have first appealed, in feeble effort to govern. How often is a child told that unless he ceases crying, he shall be shut up in a dark closet, where the ghosts will come and get him. And what an indelible impression must such a threat produce upon the timid mind! With the unreflecting, superstition is consequently strong. Their minds are not sufficiently cultivated to throw off the load which has been imposed of them. The better informed, who are accustomed to examine their feelings, and inquire into the grounds of their belief, emancipate their judgments from these unreal fears, but are generally through life in some degree under the control of the strong prejudices, which were early inculcated. The belief in supernatural appearances is so general, and is productive of such evil consequences, that the subject deserves a sober treatise.

I. We shall first allude to those appearances which are unusual, and which, to the unimformed seen supernatural, but which are capable of explanation from the known principles of philosophy or natural science. The fire balls, usually known by the name of 'Jack-with-the-Lantern,' or 'Will-o'-the-Wisp,' so often seen dancing over the marsh, produce great terror, and often serious injury. Now here there is no delusion. A person actually sees a light where there is no human being who bears it, and not being acquainted with the chemical principles of inflammable gases, and spontaneous combustion, he naturally concludes, that it must be some apparition sent as a warning to the village. Perhaps in a few days some accident occurs, or some neighbor dies, and he feels without

a doubt, that this luminous meteor was sent as a monition. This story is circulated through the whole village. As it passes from house to house, it is receiving constant accessions, and grows more marvelous and more appalling, till every child is afraid to venture out of doors, after nightfall. The man who is conversant with natural science, beholds in this appearance no cause of fear, but an interesting natural phenomenon. An inflammable gas oozes from the ground, and is set on fire by spontaneous combustion. A person who is acquainted with gases, can take a tumbler and go the marsh and fill it with this gas, and returning to his house, burn it there. But how is it set on fire, down in the marsh, where every thing is damp? It is well known that barns are frequently burnt in consequence of hay being put into them before it has been sufficiently dried. The damp hay inflames itself. In the same manner, this gas, which is so very combustible, may be set on fire, and the innocent flickering of its feeble flame, sends dismay through an ignorant and superstitious village.

Every boy is acquainted with lightwood, and yet many a man has fled as though demons were in pursuit of him, because he has seen, in some rotten stump, the bright light which decayed wood emits.—His terrified imagination, aided by the darkness of the night, transforms the stump into a giant with eyes of fire, and tongue of flame, and remembering that the 'better part of courage is discretion,' he seeks safety in flight. When he arrives at his home breathless, and pale, and trembling, to satisfy his frightened hearers that he had good cause for his terror, he declares that the giant called after him, and pursued him, and that he heard the loud clatter of the monster's feet close behind him. The children creep off trembling to bed, and dream all night of ghosts, and never forget the occurrence till their dying hour. The poor stump remains in the field perfectly unconscious of the injury it has done. The light in this decayed wood is produced by a substance called phosphorus. It is this which God has given, as a lamp to the fire-fly. This substance, chemists can collect in large quantities.—The light which it emits, is so pale that it cannot be seen in the day, but is easily discernible in the night. A person with a stick of phosphorus, once wrote upon the wall of another's bed-chamber, 'This night thou must die.' When the person entered the bed-chamber, the light of the lamp prevented his observing the light of the phosphorus; but as soon as the lamp was extinguished, he beheld the warning words glaring from the wall. But he happened to be acquainted with the nature of phosphorus, laughed heartily at the attempted deception, and quietly fell asleep. The experiment, however, was hazardous and wicked, for an ignorant person, and one of sensitive nerves, might thus have received an irrecoverable shock.

The following account of a case of unnecessary alarm, is given by Scott. The agency of philosophical principles was employed in the deception. 'At a certain old castle, on the confines of Hungary, the lord to whom it had belonged, had determined upon giving an entertainment, worthy of his own rank, and of the magnificence of the antique mansion which he inhabited. The guests of course, were numerous, and among them was a veteran officer of hussars, remarkable for his bravery. When the arrangements for the night were made, this officer was informed there would be difficulty in accommodating the company in the castle, large as it was, unless some one would take the risk of sleeping in a room supposed to be haunted; and that as he was known to be above such prejudices, the apartment was in the first place proposed for his acceptance, as the person least likely to suffer a bad night's rest from this cause. The major thankfully accepted the preference, and having shared the festivity of the evening, retired after midnight, having denounced vengeance against any one who should, by any trick, attempt to disturb his repose.—A threat which his habits would, it was supposed, render him sufficiently ready to execute. Somewhat contrary to the custom in these cases, the major went to bed, having left his candle burning, and laid his trusty pistols carefully loaded, upon his bedside.

'He had not slept an hour, when he was awakened by a solemn strain of music. He looked out. Three ladies fantastically dressed in green, were seen at the lower end of the apartment, who sung a solemn requiem. The major listened some time with delight. At last he grew tired.—'Ladies,' said he, 'this is very well, but somewhat monotonous,—will you be so kind as to change the tune.' The ladies continued singing. He expostulated, but the music was not interrupted. The major began to grow angry. 'Ladies,' said he, 'I must consider this a trick, for the purpose of terrifying me, and as I regard it as an impertinence, I shall take a rough mode of stopping it.' With that he began to handle his pistols. The ladies sang on.—He then got seriously angry.—'I will wait but five minutes,' he said, 'and then fire without hesitation.' The song was still uninterrupted,—the five minutes were expired. 'I still give you leave, ladies,' he said, 'while I count twenty.' This produced as little effect as his former threats. He counted—one, two, three, accordingly, but on approaching the end of the number, and repeating more than once his determination to fire, the last numbers, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, were pronounced with considerable pause between, and an assurance that the pistols were cocked. The ladies sang on. As he pronounced the word twenty, he fired both pistols against the musician

dameels—but the ladies sang on. The major was overcome by the unexpected inefficiency of his violence, and had an illness which lasted more than three weeks. The trick put upon him, may shortly be described by the fact, that the female choristers were placed in an adjoining room—and that he only fired at their reflection, thrown forward into that in which he slept, by the effect of a concave mirror.

Here the plain and well known laws of the reflection of light, accounts for the whole appearance. But, suppose the deception had never been explained, what reasoning could ever have satisfied the man that the room was not in reality haunted. It would have been one of the most conclusive ghost stories, that ever was heard. Had he rose from the bed to investigate, the ladies would merely have withdrawn from before the mirror, and the apparition would have vanished; and by again resuming their place, as he laid down, the vision would again have appeared before him.

The writer once knew a young man, who in sultry summer nights, rose from his bed to walk in his chamber. As he rose he observed distinctly a man on the opposite side of the room. He was much alarmed and stood still for a moment, looking at the man, and then softly slipped down behind the bed to watch his movements. As he stooped, the man stooped; when suddenly the young gentleman burst into a laugh, to find that he was watching his own reflection in the looking-glass.—A person of feeble courage, or of nervous excitability, would have screamed 'a ghost,' and would have forever declared that he could not discredit the evidence of his own senses.

We will mention another circumstance to show how easily a person may be deceived, by an occurrence, which is capable of a perfectly natural explanation. An aged lady had long been sick, and was near her death.

One afternoon as she was sitting in her room with a young lady, a friend who was her constant attendant, the whole room seemed suddenly illuminated. The room faced the east. The sun was far down in the west, and could not shine into it.—'What is that?' said the aged lady. They both looked, and beheld a strange light glittering upon the wall. Three successive times the mysterious illumination appeared and vanished. A few moments after, some one of the family entering the room, the aged lady remarked, 'I have just had a warning, which tells me that I am very near my end—a truth which certainly did not need any supernatural attestation.' Had the sick lady seen the vision alone, there would have been no difficulty in attributing it to a disordered imagination. But the young lady beheld it also, and she was one not easily alarmed. There was no way in which the occurrence could be explained, and there it rested. The aged lady felt perfectly satisfied, that she had been warned to prepare for death, and she made preparation accordingly, and in a week or two she died. She left the world entirely convinced that she had witnessed a supernatural vision. You might as well have attempted to reason her out of the belief of her own consciousness, as to have reasoned away the reality of this apparition. A week or two after her death, the writer called at a house where some college students roomed, and found them amusing themselves, by casting reflections with a large looking-glass into the houses of the village. In an instant, the whole mystery of the apparition was explained.—These young men had thrown a reflection three times into the room, and thus had given it apparently a supernatural illumination.

Any one who is acquainted with the wonderful powers of ventriloquism, knows that a person may abuse that power, to the very serious annoyance of those who are easily alarmed. A ventriloquist can, without difficulty, cause unearthly sounds, groanings, knockings, &c., to be heard in different parts of the house, and he can be all the time moving about with the family, an unsuspected spectator. Many a house has been thus haunted, to the extreme terror of its occupants, and to the great mirth of the mischievous joker.

These principles will account for a vast number of those appearances, which seem to be supernatural. The man who is unacquainted with these laws, thinks at once, and very naturally, that there must be ghostly agency in the production of effects, which to him are so unaccountable, and he is, therefore, to give the subject a cool investigation.

We have, somewhere, met with another account illustrative of the same principle.

A ship was lying becalmed, one warm summer afternoon, in the middle of the Atlantic. The atmosphere was clear, and the sky serene, with the exception of a few clouds floating in their fleecy whiteness. As the officers of the ship were carelessly reclining upon the quarter-deck, and the sailors lolling in the listlessness of a calm at sea, whistling for the wind, all were surprised by seeing, far off in the horizon, where the sky and all the water seemed to meet, a ship under full canvass, sailing along in the sky. The ship was upside down, the masts pointing towards the water. The vision was so distinct, that all perceived it, and marked the peculiarities of her rigging. For some considerable time she continued in view, attracting the gaze of the whole ship's company, till finally she vanished. The sailors, with their customary superstition, were exceedingly alarmed. This was to them a new kind of navigation. They deemed it the certain foreboding of their own destruction. The officers, better informed with regard to the laws of nature, saw in the occurrence, a very surprising, and very interesting natural phenomenon. By the peculiar state of the air, and the situation of the clouds, a mirror was formed, in which by the natural operation of reflected light, they saw the image of the ship, which had not as yet ascended the horizon. There are various kinds of mirages. Sometimes they are made of sometimes of burnished steel. There is a mirror, in which you see, in the sky, which wave luxuriantly upon the sea.